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ALSATIAN WITCH STORIES.

I.

A WITCH in the ancient city of Strasburg, Alsace, having apparently no other means of diversion, changed herself into a horse, and day after day appeared at a certain blacksmith shop. One day the smith's apprentice, who suspected that the horse was a witch, nailed shoes on to its hoofs, and when the witch resumed her natural shape, the shoes, being unchangeable, were still attached to her hands and feet. This story was related by the writer's maternal grandfather. (For another instance where a witch received such treatment, see Lawrence's "The Magic of the Horseshoe," p. 133; quoting Thorpe's "Northern Mythology," vol. ii, p. 190.)

II.

Another witch had a way of milking a neighbor's cow without the owner's knowledge. She fastened together four towels with pins supposed to have some magic power. The towels were then hung on the wall or on a door and the witch went through a mock milking performance, and the milk from the cow's udder was in this mysterious way induced to drip from the witch's towels and the neighbor's cow was soon dry.¹

III.

The writer's maternal grandfather, an Alsatian, who was one of the early settlers of Waterloo County, Ontario, used to tell of an experience he had when he was a boy. His parents being dead he lived with an uncle. Every night after he had retired, a black hen fluttered about his head. He endured this night after night for some time, but at last, seeing that the mysterious performance was bound to continue indefinitely, he decided to tell his uncle and ask him what was to be done. So one morning he told him, and his uncle advised him to go to sleep with his hands and feet crossed. He did this and the hen never appeared again.

¹ Dr. R. Lawrence in his book, *The Magic of the Horseshoe*, gives a somewhat similar story: "In Scotland, even as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, the peasantry believed that witches were able to draw milk from all the cattle in their neighborhood, by tugging at a hair rope in imitation of the act of milking. Such a rope was made of hairs from the tails of several cows, whose exact number was indicated by knots in the rope. While tugging at the rope the witches repeated the following or a similar charm:—

"Cow's milk and mare's milk,
And every beast that bears milk,
Between St. Johnstone's and Dundee,
Come a' to me, come a' to me."

—P. 91 *et seq.*

IV.

The following is a translation of a story often told by the writer's mother, who, in turn, got the story from her mother, a native of Alsace.

"Once there was a young married man whose mother was a poor widow. One day the young man and his wife had a roast fowl for dinner, but just as they were going to sit down to eat, the man saw his aged mother coming down the road toward his house. He quickly hid the juicy roast in a chest near at hand, and exclaimed, 'The old woman is coming, she shall have none of it!' After she was gone, the son looked into the chest and saw a large snake which had coiled itself around the fowl. He then saw that God had sent the snake as a punishment to him for being unfilial."

V. FAIRY GOLD.

As a party of young Alsatians were returning at a late hour from a festival held at a neighboring *Dorf*, they found, at the side of the path they were traversing, a heap of glowing coals. Each one took a coal and put it into his pipe to light the tobacco. The presence of the coals out in the midst of the snow did not seem to cause any surprise, as they might have been left by some traveler, but judge of their astonishment in the morning, when each one found at the bottom of his pipe a shining *Gold stück* ("gold-piece" — a gold coin).

The old Alsatian, who used to relate this story to my father when he was a boy, related it as an actual experience, he having been one of the young men in the party. The above is a translation of my father's version.

VI. RACE SMELL.

It is a well known fact that every different race of people emits a different smell, it being an especial characteristic of the Negro. In Germany, where the anti-Semitic feeling is very strong, they account for the Jew's in the following manner: Christ once visited a poor Hebrew woman, who hid her seven children in a pig-sty. He asked her what was in the sty and she told him that it contained pigs. Then Jesus said, "If they are pigs, then let them remain pigs." In endeavoring to give such an odious explanation of the origin of this natural characteristic, they overlooked the fact that the Jews did not eat swine's flesh and therefore would not have occasion to keep these animals.

VII. BAVARIAN WITCHCRAFT.

In answer to the inquiry whether she believed in witches, an aged Bavarian woman, now deceased, told me that only one case of veritable witchcraft had ever come under her observation, and that was of a cow

which had been bewitched by a neighbor. It appears that her employer's house was separated from their neighbor's by a canal. The cow calved and for two days gave large quantities of milk, but on the third day the cow failed to give any milk. They consulted a witch-doctor, who asked them whether they had sold any milk, and who had been the purchasers, and on being informed that they had sold some to their neighbor, he told them that *he* had bewitched the cow.

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